

East Tunnel Viaduct  
Pennsylvania Railroad  
Crossing Conemaugh River,  
.3 mile S of Conemaugh Dam  
Blairsville Vicinity  
Indiana County  
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-267

HAER  
PA,  
32-BLAVI.V,  
1-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
EAST TUNNEL VIADUCT

HAER  
PA  
32-BLAVI.V,  
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Location: Crossing Conemaugh River, .3 mile South of Conemaugh Dam, between Blairsville Vicinity, Conemaugh Township, Indiana County and Brenizer Vicinity, Derry Township, Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania

USGS Quad: Blairsville (1:24000)  
UTM: 17/638800/4480050

Date of Construction: 1907

Builder: Pennsylvania Railroad  
William H. Brown, chief engineer

Present Owner: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Present Use: access road

Significance: The East Tunnel Viaduct was constructed as part of a major rebuilding project undertaken in the 1880s by the Pennsylvania Railroad, in which many of the former iron or wooden bridges on the line were replaced with stone bridges and viaducts.

Project Information: In February 1987, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) began a multi-year historical and architectural documentation project in southwestern Pennsylvania. Carried out in conjunction with America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), HAER undertook a comprehensive inventory of Blair, Cambria, Fayette, and Indiana counties as the first step in identifying the region's surviving historic engineering works and industrial resources.

The results of this project have been published in Indiana County, Pennsylvania: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites (1993), edited by Ken Rose and produced by HABS/HAER for the National Park Service.

Compiler: Richard Quinn, Historian

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History:

**DESCRIPTION:** Partially submerged below the waters of Conemaugh River Lake is a stone viaduct constructed in 1907 to carry the Pennsylvania Rail Road across the Conemaugh River east from the Bow Ridge Tunnel. The massive masonry structure is supported by five semicircular stone arches. During the inventory visit in July 1990, the reservoir waters stood to the top of the arches, about 6' below the top of the bridge.

**HISTORY:** In the 1880s the Pennsylvania Rail Road, under chief engineer William H. Brown, began a major rebuilding project in which many of the former iron or wooden bridges on the line were replaced with stone bridges and viaducts. Although stone construction was more expensive than steel construction, stone structures required far less maintenance, resulting in substantial long-term savings for the company. Built in 1907, this viaduct remained in service until 1952, when the rail line was rerouted. The Conemaugh Reservoir was then impounded, and this viaduct has since been largely submerged, the tops of its stone arches barely visible. At high water, the bridge is completely underwater. It remains in fair condition, however, and is used as an access road to service the intake system for the water sluice through Bow Ridge, which serves the powerhouse below Conemaugh Dam.

Sources:

- Consolidated Rail Corporation. Conrail List of Undergrade and Overgrade Structures in Specified Counties. Philadelphia: Consolidated Rail Corporation, 1988.
- Interview with William Dzombak, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Conemaugh River Dam, Saltsburg, July 1990.